

TAPE INDEX

Jim Leary  
March 26, 1985

Charlie Zimmerman Home  
Rural Jueau, WI

1. Collector's announcement. [The kitchen fan can be heard here and elsewhere on the tape.]
2. Grandparents on dad's side from Germany. Grandpa played fiddle, uncles played for house parties in the 30s.
3. C got involved with music as a teen. Started with harmonica. Learned one song, "Farmer in the Dell," then "after I learned that one, the rest just came."
4. At 9-10 years took six months of piano lessons. "I still can't play piano." A valuable experience, however, for learning the structure of music.
5. At 18 bought guitar from cousin for \$5, liked to play rhythm.
6. Went together with uncle to buy a piano accordion. Uncle played by notes, C by ear.
7. Neighbor's daughter left an accordion in the rain, C's dad got it for him, played this for 20 years. Has had current accordion for 7-8 years. Bid low for it, an Italian Scandelli with a nice tone, at a Music Store--the owner was eager to sell it.
8. Played "German style" accordion for awhile, owned by another cousin. One row of buttons and two bass levers, like playing the harmonica--in fact, C breathed in and out when playing it.
9. Grandfather, John Zimmerman, came over in early 1900s (C's dad was born in 1914). John was a blacksmith in Germany, farmed in the U.S. but had a shop on the farm. Played fiddle "for the heck of it," not in any sort of group.
10. Uncles played for house parties in the 30s until one, the piano accordionist, reckoned it was too tough to play most of the night then get up to

milk cows. Oldest was Ernie, fiddle; Fred played piano accordion. Other friends played guitar and saw.

11. Would roll up rugs at house parties and put extra posts under the floor. usually on weekends, but some weeknights. Same group of people but at different houses. Events centered around music and dancing.

12. Card parties were "an offshoot from those who didn't dance or play music." They'd go in another rooms and play cards: sheephead.

13. Musical house parties before C's time, but card parties every Saturday night. C and Lynn got to know each other through card parties. "Mostly the men played." Still this way, with sheephead and 500 the most popular games.

14. C's relations talked plenty about the good times of house parties.

15. C born in 1938.

16. Grandmother never learned to speak English, ditto for grandpa. She'd sing songs every once in awhile. "They ain't any different than the ones they paly on WTKM."

17. "I spent a lot of time by my grandparents." C told that he could speak German before English, but he doesn't remember this at all. Son Tommy recently in a German play, C could pick up most of it.

18. Lynn's grandparents from Austria and Germany. Grandmother knew no English when she started school. Was given a note, "Please do not send this child to school until she can speak English." After that only English was spoken in the homeeeeeee.

19. C's dad enjoys speaking German. Reads the German bible and he has studied plenty family history. Zimmermans from Posen. Family were farmers, but lost everything during wartime. Settled in Waukesha county between Waukesha and Delafield.

20. Family had hard times during the Depression, but some of their fondest

times too.

21. C's family moved to Juneau area in 1950, then to another farm in 1955, then C and wife married in 1968 and bought present farm which neighbors his dad's.

22. C and uncle didn't have an accordion when he was a teen. Talked uncle into playing again. Found a 48 bass accordion in, new, sounded pretty good but not real high quality. Bought in Milwaukee.

23. There's still an accordion in the family "from the old house party days," but it was owned by someone else in the extended family. It's not used now.

[Break in the tape as C readies his accordion.]

24. Untitled tune that his uncle used to play while his mother sang "This is the day they give babies away/With every pound of tea." Two parts, played in German style, but sounds--the first part anyway--like an Irish tune. [326]

25. "You Can't Be True Dear"/"Du Kanst Nicht Treusein," from his grandmother's singing. [This and the previous number are done nicely.]

26. "O Sussana Schotische."

27. C picks up new tunes off records or the radio. Some just catch his ear. Recently learned "Polish Girlfriend." C likes "Justy and the Keybenders," "Gentleman Jim," Louie Bashell--"one of my favorites." C says lots of bands play tunes he likes, but then they change their style. After tape's run out, C says he likes Louie Bashell in particular because his style hasn't changed.

[TAPE ONE ENDS]

27. (cont.) Praise of Bashell. Mention that Tony Rademacher's style has changed. He played a tune, "Toby's Polka," that C's son Timmy (who plays spoons and drums) liked so much he bought the album so his dad could learn it. Rademacher's from Menominee Falls.

28. Importance of Hartford Rado station in keeping polka interest alive.

29. Discussion of change in style of Julida Boys from Dutchman to Blazonczyk to

something else now.

30. C reckons there are many concertinists in Hustisford who were Irving DeWitz's students.

31. Concertina music isn't dying. C mentions a young friend who plays concertina and attends Minnesota festivals. The Zimmermans complain that local schools look down on polka music, but assert that there's real "feeling" in this music.

32. Some nights C can play accordion and everything feels right, other nights "it isn't there." But "when it clicks," C plays on and on. Performs while family does dishes.

33. C confesses he always wanted to play string bass. Took up accordion since he had no one to play with. Now has fingers toughened to back up daughter's fiddling with his guitar.

34. C smashed a finger on left hand in 1966, but can flex it enough to play bass notes on accordion. Can't bar with a guitar, however.

35. "Toby's Polka" from Tony Rademacher.

36. "Toyland Polka," from "Justy and the Keybenders" (Harold Justman).

37. "Polish Girlfriend" from "Gentleman Jim." Learned from the radio.

38. Hard to play along with a record because with speed changes it can get a little out of tune, but fun to play along with live shows on weekends over WTKM.

39. "Polka Party Polka" from "Justy." Zimmerman kids like this because of its directions to put "our rears in gear." Justy uses this to close shows.

40. 25 years ago #39 played on "Dairyland Jubilee," same tune but with different lyrics. This happens often, reckons C.

41. "Hopscotch Polka," picked up from someone off the radio.

42. "Paddle Your Own Canoe," from a square dance of years ago. "My mother liked that one." C "can make a polka out of anything . . . it's just the way I

play anything."

43. C can't remember any more family tunes, but certain there are more if he could just be reminded by someone.

44. #24 repeated, with mistakes toward the close.

[TAPE TWO ENDS, THE SESSION ENDS]